

MARTHA K. POEPOE HOHU

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Martha K. Poepoe Hohu

(1907 - )

Mrs. Hohu was born in Honolulu to the Reverend Henry K. and Lucia Awai Poepoe. She received her education at Kaiulani School, Kamehameha Schools, the Territorial Normal School and the University of Hawaii.

She taught music at Kamehameha Schools and was the accompanist for Bernice Adele Ross, a violinist, until she became the guide to exhibits at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in 1949. She has conducted musical research on the Neighbor Islands, particularly at Hana, Maui, and composed the music for the song "Hawaii" for which Mary Kawena Pukui wrote the lyrics. For many years she directed the Hawaiian Electric Employees Glee Club and the Kauhakapili Church choir. She has revised the old Hawaiian hymn books and in 1971 she headed a committee that compiled a new Hawaiian hymnal. She also wrote the music for all of the songs and chants in the movie "Bird of Paradise" in the early 1950's.

This transcript contains Mrs. Hohu's personal and family history; opinions and observations regarding Hawaiian music; and reminiscences about some prominent persons.

Katherine B. Allen, Interviewer

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INTERVIEW WITH MARTHA K. POEPOE HOHU

(MRS. CLARENCE K. HOHU)

In the book store at Bishop Museum where she is employed.

September 27, 1971

H: Martha K. Hohu

A: Kathy Allen, Interviewer

H: I am Mrs. Martha Poepoe Hohu. I was born in Honolulu, Oahu. My father was the Reverend Henry K. Poepoe and my mother's name was Lucia Awai Poepoe. I have two children; a daughter, Martha Kaumakaokalani Hohu Kiaha, and a son, Clarence Herbert Kealoha Hohu. Both children are married and they gave us a total of nine grandchildren.

A: Would you give married partners' names.

H: Yes. For our daughter Martha, her husband's name is Charles Kiaha; and our son's [wife's] name is Kanani Okashige. See, that's giving her maiden name.

A: All right. And there're nine grandchildren. How many from each one?

H: Five from our daughter and four from our son.

A: Would you name your son's, because he carries the family name.

H: Our son's children's names, especially the boys, are Clarence Kainoa Hohu and, would you believe it, I can't remember the second grandson's English name but his Hawaiian name is Kamaoha Hohu. And the girls are Holly Kuuipoikamalani--the love that was wafted by the wind; and the last daughter's name is Waiolu Hohu.

A: Fine. These are the four children of your son. Are any of them married?

H: No, they're of school age. They're all of school age.

The children from our daughter: Charles Rider Kiaha; Gregg Kealoha Kiaha; Mark Pu'ukapu Kiaha; Daniel Hoakahilani Kiaha; and Marthalei Ululani Kiaha.

A: All right. Now this takes care of your grandchildren. Now would you give the names of your brothers and sisters. How many are there?

H: Ten of us, altogether. Our father's name was Poepoe, so if I can just give the first names of the boys: Andrew, Sam, Abraham, Daniel, and John, who was adopted by an aunt of ours and he assumed the name John Spencer.

A: Is that John Spencer from Hilo?

H: No, Honolulu. And my sisters, beside myself: Helen, Ellen, Dorothy, and Mary was also adopted by the Spencers and she took the name Mary Spencer.

A: What is your middle name?

H: I carry my father's name but the "K" does stand for Kaumakaokalani which is a name that my daughter has. It may not be used beyond her. It stops with her.

A: That's very good. Would you explain that, please.

H: I don't know why it is but it was a name that was given to my mother by someone in the king's court, for my grandmother was a chanter in the court. This would be during the time of Kalakaua.

A: What was your grandmother's name? You don't know?

A: And when the household learned that her daughter, who is my mother, was in the family way, this was the suggestion: that if it were a girl, then it was to be the name Kaumakaokalani. And I happen to be the bearer of that name.

A: Are you the oldest girl in the family?

H: No, my sister Helen is the oldest. I'm number eight.

A: Then if you don't know your grandmother's name, do you know your grandfather's name?

H: Uh uh. I'm afraid I'm very lacking in those, especially I. My sister, Helen, and I think my sister, Dorothy, are the two sisters who have kept a record of our family.

A: Would you give the married names of those two, then, please.

- H: It's Helen P. White. Mrs. William O. White, I suppose I should say. And my sister Dorothy's name is Dorothy Chong. She's a widow.
- A: But Dorothy Chong's husband's name was what?
- H: John. Mrs. John [Chong]. That's right. Personally, I wish you'd interview her before me. She's got it.
- A: No. Your grandmother who was the chanter, would that have been on your mother's side?
- H: My mother's mother. Right.
- A: And your father is Poepoe side. Now, do you know any of the grandparents?
- H: No, I'm afraid I don't. One interesting highlight regarding my mother's father is that he was a silk merchant and arrived in Hawaii before 1870.
- A: Where did he come from, do you know?
- H: No, I'm afraid I couldn't answer that either.
- A: Was he a silk merchant here?
- H: Yes, he came down to open up a shop in the city of Honolulu. I don't think he lived too much longer after he arrived here but he was here before 1870.
- A: Now you were born in Honolulu. Were you born in a hospital or at home, do you remember? Or do you know?
- H: I'm afraid I don't know.
- A: Where did your family live, when you were a child?
- H: Dad was a minister in the Islands and he served for forty-seven years as a minister for the Congregational churches. He started out serving what they call the Hawaiian Evangelical Association and today that is known as the United Church of Christ, Hawaii Conference. We first lived in the area that is now where the Salvation Army unit is located on Vineyard Street, not too far from Foster Gardens. That was Dad's first work area. We left that area when I was five years old and moved to the parsonage located at 768 Kanoa Street, which is back of the Kaumakapili Church, and Dad served as a minister there for thirty-four years.
- A: That church has a great deal of historical value, doesn't it?

H: Yes, it does. It was established by the father of Mrs. Ben Dillingham, the mother of the Dillingham family as we know them today, and the gentleman's name was Lowell Smith. And he felt that there was a need for a church for the poor people and so established this first church which was a thatched hut set-up, located in the area as you and I know today as Smith Street, Beretania Street. Then later they built a second building with a twin steeple, which was burned down in the fire in 1900. Then two more buildings were set up after that and the present building, located in the square on King Street and Banyan Street is the fourth of the churches that was built. [There is a street named Poepoe Place off King Street in the general vicinity.]

A: Which is the one standing today?

H: Uh huh.

A: This was also where they had mass meetings in connection with the revolution, I believe; at this church. That would have been before your father . . . ?

H: That would probably be the one downtown, the Smith Street area, 1900--before then. Now, what else? School? My schooling: I attended the Kaiulani School, which is located on King Street across from where the Kaumakapili Church stands. I was there for six years. Then I attended Kamehameha Schools, grades seven through twelve; spent two years at the Territorial Normal and Training School, which no longer exists, then finished my education at the University of Hawaii, supposedly to be a school teacher but I never ever went into that field. I loathed school-teaching.

A: Did you get your B. A. at the university?

H: At the university. I've done other types of teaching. I've done music teaching at Kamehameha School. I've gone in over the years as a substitute teacher, both the boys' and girls' schools. I enjoyed that.

A: Yes. I wanted you to talk a little bit about that experience there.

H: Whenever a teacher went on a year's leave, I would help. I had two incidents where two of the school teachers at the Kamehameha School for Boys suddenly left school in December of the school year and twice I happened to be visiting on the Neighbor Islands and twice I had calls to come back to teach, which I did with permission from the director of the Bishop Museum, 'cause I was then in the

employ of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum.

A: You're a guide, is that correct?

H: Guide to exhibits. I also am responsible for the front area, which includes admissions, PBX board, and a bit on security.

A: How long have you been here?

H: I've been here at the museum since 1949. I was here--and I'm happy to say it--when Sir Peter Buck was the director and I was glad to have **known** that great man.

A: Would you tell a little bit about Sir Peter Buck.

H: Sir Peter Buck actually was an M. D. but after World War I he became interested in man for what he was, then went back to take up anthropology and became the director of the museum here in 1936, I believe, and was here in that position until 1951. I loved him for the man that he was--a great scholar and a humble man; a man that knew what he was doing and yet was not the type to wear his halo over his head and I think that's why I liked him, 'cause he was a humble man. He was also quite learned in the chants of New Zealand and I had the great privilege of listening to him chant, both in the language, which is Maori--his language--and then the translation in English. I reveled in those moments when he had us up as guests in his home.

A: Have you--since your grandmother was a chanter--have you ever been a chanter?

H: No, but I've done other phases of music. Music is a hobby with me. If I make anything out of it, fine; if I don't, it's all right, because it's a talent that I don't own but it's a talent that I must share. And I feel that I must share it with those who don't have it but are willing to learn and want to learn. I direct the choir of our church, the Kaumakapili Church, and I also direct the Hawaiian Electric Employees Glee Club.

A: How long have you directed them?

H: I will have been there fourteen years next month, October.

A: And with the church?

H: I assumed the position back about in the middle of the thirties. And music is both in Hawaiian and English, 'cause we sing some of the anthems in Hawaiian, but I'm afraid we veer toward the English more than we do Hawaiian

because the Hawaiian anthems are limited and the English anthems are such that they can be used with various festival days during the year and so we tend to go that way. However, we use our Hawaiian hymns every Sunday; that we don't forget because that's part of our heritage.

I go once a week to the Island of Maui to Hana. I direct the little choral group there which is a part of the Hana cultural set-up and music is one phase of their work so I go up there to work with the grandmothers and great-grandmothers and the young adults and I have a wonderful time with them, learning to sing our Hawaiian songs that are what I call the classic of Hawaii.

A: Could you select one among these that you especially like or that you especially feel represents the Hawaiians?

H: Well, it just happened that as we were about to begin our little talk here, the record was playing "Ua Like No A Like" and that is a favorite, if not one of the favorites, for so many people that live here in the Islands.

A: Would you tell of the title of that.

H: "Our love being constant."

A: And that is one of the classics definitely. As a director --for instance, as a director of the Hawaiian Electric Glee Club--how do you determine your selections?

H: Definitely, only the best of the Hawaiian songs. I do not want to spend my time on any of the hulas, 'cause they're here today and they're gone tomorrow, and I can't do too much with them because they're just that. But I take any of David Nape's songs; Charles E. King's; Ernest Kaai. Any of the songs by any of those men and many, many others that have some body in them. I feel that they're the songs to be taught. I arrange the music for all of these groups that I work with. I have to arrange them because Hawaiian music as such is not available, and I enjoy doing that.

A: In your experience in Hana, Maui, have you recently or during your time with these people encountered any song that you had never heard before?

H: Only one that someone had composed for Hana. I still have to work it out but they sang it to me and I must put it down. I've got it down in my own notation, but I must arrange it and then teach it back to them. Isn't that something?

A: Yes, it is. I'm not sure that I understand that.



H: Well, it's a song that was composed, evidently, some years back. Some of the folks knew it but then they just kinda lost it. And because I went back, I did ask for some songs that are theirs. And this was brought up, I listened to a tape, I made my notation, but I must sit down and work it out so that I can write it and have it. I always feel that the music doesn't belong to me, it's for the people tomorrow, but it's my job to see that it gets written. If I don't write it and I go away with it, it's lost then to posterity.

A: Yes. And this song, has it a name yet?

H: I can't remember, now, what the title is but it has to do with the district of Hana. Another interesting thing in my work with Hana is: many of them will know, well, shall I say, the chorus and the stanza of one song, but I'll rake up the three, four, or five or six stanzas that belong and they're quite surprised. And because I'm hard-headed, I suppose, they're made to learn them with the understanding that it is part of the song. It's not for me but it is for them. And they have received great enjoyment when they have learned these stanzas, other than that one that everybody knows, because all of the stanzas tell the complete story of the place, 'cause we make a circle of the district of Hana. And so, that is interesting, too. We feel that it's a facet that belongs and not just teach a song, you know, just to teach it.

A: How do you "rake" these other choruses up, by going to different people?

H: You mean the words? The words? Well, I have access to them here [at Bishop Museum]. We have a kind of a library and I make mention of it and the words just seem to come. I feel it's important, 'cause there surely must be more than one [stanza] and I've gotten them all and we've learned them all. I use the same system with the Hawaiian Electric. If I feel that there are stanzas that are worth learning, we learn them all because it's important.

A: Yes, to get the full picture of the story. I understand that.

H: To get the full picture, right. I'd like to relate an experience.

A: Please do.

H: Back when I first started with Hawaiian Electric, the only music I had available at the time when they asked me were simple arrangements of songs like "Akahi Ho'i," "Nani Wale

Lihue," "Wailana," very short songs--eight short measures. The members of the group weren't exactly interested in what I had to offer, although I understood them to say that it had to be Hawaiian. Well, again I repeat, I must have been hard-headed and we learned the songs. Very shortly after, we had an invitation to sing at the MacNaughton home. [President of] Castle & Cooke.

A: Malcolm MacNaughton.

H: Is that Diamond Head area? He has to do with the sugar industry and all the top gentlemen came down from the Neighbor Islands and they were at this little party that he had and we sang these songs and others that we had learned. And the first thing that Mrs. MacNaughton said to me after our singing was over, she said, "I haven't heard those songs in years." I just smiled at her, but I looked at the members. I never said a word. I wanted that impression to sink in their minds, for later I said to them, "When I choose a song, I know what I'm doing. I have a reason." And I felt that her remark was sufficient. There would be no questioning on any song that I chose for them to learn. And so today, anything that I suggest is accepted, 'cause they learned a lesson very shortly after we started singing together. I'll never forget; I'll never forget that. She just came right out and she said it and everybody just looked and I thought to myself, "Take a load of this, kids." Well, some people, you tell them and they won't believe, but let it come from people like you, like her. Saturday, we happened to be entertaining for the Daughters of the Nile. They had their scholarship tea at Washington Place.

A: That would have been September 25, 1971.

H: Right. And again the comment: "Oh, those songs that we haven't heard for so long. Oh, they're just beautiful." Again I say, our people need to learn these songs and sing them. We, the Hawaiian Electric, entertain monthly at the Halekulani [Hotel] and the comments we get after go like this: "How is it that we don't hear songs like these? Why must we hear One 'Paddle, Two Paddle'?" I make no comment because professionally if I said something, it would not be nice for the people who make an effort to try to entertain our visitors, so I make no comment but just look at them and smile. That, to me, would be sufficient answer.

A: Have you composed any songs yourself?

H: A few. I've done very, very few; not too much. I can compose if I'm given words.

A: I see, you compose the music, then?

H: Yes, I must have the words, 'cause I'm not very good with the lyrics. My Hawaiian is not good enough and my English too. I just don't do it. Mrs. [Mary Kawena] Pukui and I did a number together. You know, the Island of Hawaii does not have what I call a general song. They have district songs but they do not have a general song. The song, Hilo--what is it?

A: "Hilo March."

H: "Hilo March" speaks only of the district of Hilo, it doesn't speak of the island. So, in discussing the idea with Mrs. Pukui, she came up with these words to which I have set the music and the Hawaiian Electric owns that copy. And it's what I would call a big number. It isn't very long but it has lots of meat and body to it and the words are beautiful.

A: Could you give the name of that song?

H: Just "Hawaii." That's all it is.

A: I'm interested because I come from that island too.

H: See, in the lyrics she mentions the Wahine with a capital W and the reference there is to Pele and she mentions the fact that when Pele goes to work, everybody goes to visit. And so, Hawaii is that place where people go to visit when the volcano gets to work. And so, there you have a something that belongs. The volcano dominates the Island of Hawaii and so she mentions that.

I just very recently did a song for the high-teen children of our church. They were going to attend the UCC [United Church of Christ] conference in Kamuela, Hawaii and since they were going as a singing group, I asked that some lyrics be made and I would put the music to it and that would be their song. And so, I did. It's a song that can be sung both in church and away from church. Very simple music that would be adaptable to any group of young people that is quite rousing because the words are rousing words. They're in Hawaiian.

A: And who wrote the words?

H: The person who wrote the words is Mrs. Francis Kanahele; Annie Kanahele she is. She is the president of Board of Missions for the Pacific area. (The tape at the end got entangled and had to be spliced but nothing seems to be

lost on this side of the tape)

END OF SIDE 1/1ST TAPE

H: Because I was number eight in the line of children that were born, I and my sister, Dorothy, and my brother, Daniel, came under the watchful care of my sister, Helen, who was a school teacher. And because she was a school teacher, the English in our home had to be (where the tape is spliced, I have reconstructed as I remember it) nothing but the best. In Hawaiian, I could not converse fast enough. (end reconstruction) If I am pushed up against the wall, I'll do it. But I suppose I'm too lazy to think Hawaiian, for English is my number one language. We were not allowed to make any errors in our English in the home. Well enough. I see the children today and the conflicts that arise in classrooms because of what I call two English languages in the home--where the child hears the home English, as it were, which is not very good, and then to have to face the teacher with what is known as the English, the child is confused.

And more and more, I know that my sister knew what she was doing when she saw to it that we spoke nothing but the best. I carried the system out with our grandchildren and at no time are they allowed to make an error, even with the oldest, and the correction is done even in the presence of company but often company doesn't hear the error. Maybe I hear it because I'm listening for it, I'm waiting for it, and once the correction is made by the child himself, there is no question after that that he will repeat that error. And that sounds like I'm regimenting the teaching. I am not. I'm really just helping them so that when they go to school there's no problem of trying to understand the teacher. She will speak just the way Grandma and Mommy do. And I think that's one reason the children can do as well as they do, because we help at home so that the thinking is the same.

My sister, Helen, again was the one who often took us to the beach. My mother was always busy with the regular chores that you find in a home with many, many children. My mother was not an outgoing woman, if I may use that word, for she felt that her place was in the home and she did very, very well by my father. Things were always ready for him. He never had to wait for anything. Everything was done the way they were to be done. And when they speak of my father, I say, "No, not my father; my mother."

A: It's usually the woman behind the man.

H: Right. They don't see those hands that made him the man that he was. He was dubbed "The Best Dressed Minister in

the Islands," and that was quite something. And I'm proud of him because I think that what we lack today is men like that. We see enough of the Hippie-type thing. Maybe I'm old-fashioned, but I still maintain that there is a place for dress everywhere.

A: Are your parents deceased?

H: Yes, both. My mother died in November two years ago [1969] at the age of ninety-five. Dad passed away in 1950 at seventy-eight. And you don't talk about things like that, but he died on Christmas Eve and, of course, the service that had been planned for the evening went on like nothing had happened. But after it was all over, I went home and I saw my mother doing the bed in my dad's room and I said, "Mama?" She says, "Oh, this must be done." I said, "Oh, fine. Can I do anything?" She says, "No." And I said, "Then I will see you tomorrow. Good night." And I left her. 'Cause this was the comment my mother made: "His work is finished. He goes home to his Maker." A strong thought and a thought that I think more people should have. 'Cause she felt that he had done his work and it was time to return. That was the way she felt and that's what she told us and it was a lesson for us. But she lived on and passed away very peacefully at the age of ninety-five, two years ago coming November.

A: What were the main problems for your father as a minister, would you say, at the time that he was active?

H: No problem, as I can see it. I think the reason for that is the type of man that he was. He was very strong and he knew exactly what he wanted to say and how to say it. In fact, he was highly esteemed by--you just mention his name and they just know it. I know many times when we take our trips through the Neighbor Islands, it is so easy for me to say, "I am the Reverend Poepoe's daughter." It's very easy for me to say that, but why should I? I am myself and I have a name to bear and I don't have to lean on him. However, when they find out who I am, then of course, you know, many memories come back and why didn't I say that. I make no comment, but I feel that I have my own two feet to walk on. If they find out that I am his daughter, fine; if not, then just leave it be. I feel that that's important and that's a lesson for many people to learn. I experience that here at the museum when they come and flaunt their life history at me. It doesn't move me. I'm afraid it doesn't. It should, but it doesn't. What I'm saying by my eyes is that, "Well, so what about it?" That sounds fresh but they may have gotten across with that at other places, but not with me. I feel you travel on your own two feet and leave your family alone

where they are, because I make no confession for family. That's terrible. I sound terrible, don't I? But I'm just human in my approach because I learned also from Dr. Buck that humbleness. Just do your own--as the kids say--do your own thing in your own way and don't lean on somebody else and let them carry you through. Carry yourself through on your own.

A: But you understand that I'm asking you all this because we're interested in the history of your family which naturally begins, as far as you're concerned, with your father and mother.

H: Yes, right. Right. Right. Dad was very dynamic. His education stopped at grade three at Lahainaluna School.

A: Lahainaluna, by the way, was the first high school . . .

H: High school established west of the Mississippi in 1831 by the missionaries. [It was actually "west of the Rocky Mountains," according to Thrum's Almanac.] And when I make that comment to a tour group, they look at me as much as to say, "Are you sure?" And especially if the person comes from California. They don't like to have something said that isn't their first. So I make that quite emphatic that it is the first. Also that the first printing press west of the Rockies was to be found here in the school and that, again, always shakes them up. But what I try to say to them is that there are places besides yours and it would do you well to learn about these things that happened in other places and not keep your nose only onto your own place.

One of the experiences I'd like to share with you is when the picture, "Bird of Paradise," was filmed here in Hawaii back in the early 1950's, the musical director for that movie was Ken Darby. He's quite a musician. He has a group of men called The King's Men and they've done a couple of recordings. He came to the museum this one day and asked if he could look at the musical instruments. I took him to the cases, showed them to him, he looked at them, then he pulled out of his pocket a black notebook. I really didn't mean to look, but when he opened that little black notebook and I saw what I saw, I was very interested, for the sketches of the instruments were in that little black notebook and just a little bit on each of the instruments. I didn't ask him what he was interested in but I waited for him and then he said, "Do you think I can hear some of these instruments played?" I said, "Perhaps. We have a library." We have some gramophone records. I think that's the round things. He went up and he found that the machine didn't work. Well, the end result of

that was that he gave us our first tape recording machine here in the museum. It was a gift from Twentieth Century.

Well, he found out through another way that he should have asked me about some Hawaiian music. I wasn't about to tell him all I knew because he didn't ask me anything, so. And I wasn't going to share what I knew. But, to cut the story short, I was hired to be the music writer for all of the songs and chants that were done on the "Bird of Paradise" movie. It was my first experience of that kind. I said to him very foolishly, "Why don't we tape it, you know, in another way we can get the groups to sing?" He said, "No, it must be done while the movie reel is running." I said, "Oh. Oh, that's all right, I can do that." So actually what it was was a shorthand of the music that was being sung at that time, so I was just transcribing on paper what they were singing. Then I would take that music that I had written and transcribe it for the library of Twentieth Century and out it went that night on a Pan Am plane, with the reel. It went with the reel. Then in the morning at 9 o'clock our time, we got a call from the office there that said, "Re-do such and such a thing; or Tape #10 is perfect, continue." It was kind of an experience I had never had before and I'm glad I did it. And I'm glad I won over somebody else, mainly because I knew my Hawaiian. I'll never, never forget that. And of course, that began a wonderful, wonderful friendship with Ken Darby. He lives in Ventura, California.

A: In other words, you were selected in competition with someone else. You were the one selected.

H: Right.

A: And in "Bird of Paradise," who were the stars?

H: Debbie Reynolds, I think it is. And I can't think of the man's name. I'm not very good when it comes to movies and TV. But I was just happy to be able to do the movie. Of course, I had to be released from work here for the one week that I did all that music writing, but I was glad for the experience.

A: They seem to be quite good about letting you do that, but then I can understand why.

H: Well, Sir Peter Buck was the director at the time. Yes, it would have to be he. And when someone was sent to ask me if I would be interested, I said, "I suppose I would but it would be an experience I've never had. I hope I can fulfill the bill." I said, "You don't ask me; you ask my boss."

A: So they borrowed you.

H: They did. And then he called me in and he said, "What's this I hear?" I said, "I don't know any more about it than you do." He said, "Do you want to go?" And I said, "I wouldn't mind the experience, Sir Peter." And with that, he gave me his blessing and I went to work for them for one week. All that music was taped in the new radio room just finished at the Kamehameha Schools.

A: At that time?

H: At that time. Just finished. And so we were allowed to go in and use the room.

A: Almost as though it were timed for it.

H: Well, the president at that time was Colonel Harold W. Kent. He was the president of the schools at the time. And, when they wanted to tape the music, they sent this gentleman to ask me and I said, "Why do you ask me?" I said, "Why don't you just go to the school yourself?" And the statement was: "Mr. Kent happens to be on vacation and you know how to reach him and he will listen to you." I said, "Oh?" Well, it just happened that I did know where he was and that I could get to him, so I called, made the necessary arrangements, and away we went to call on him. That, too, was the beginning of a very, very lovely friendship between Mr. Kent and the men who were helping put this movie up. I'll never forget that because if any one of us knows Mr. Kent as well as I do, he'll always say "Yes" when he knows what the problem is. The answer that evening, after we had called on him, was that I need to discuss this with the trustees, which is right. And then he says, "By 11 o'clock tomorrow morning, which is a Saturday, I will give you an answer." And he was a man of his word. Eleven o'clock, we got the word, "Yes."

And I say again, people who don't understand him draw conclusions before they have a chance. And I think the reason I appreciate Mr. Kent is that I see my father in him over and over again--a man who is quick to make an answer because immediately he sees the problem and the answer, and Dad was that way. And so, when people say to me, "How can you stand him?" I say, "Well, I had a father like that. I can take another man like that, so it never bothers me." I say to them, "Go to the man and he will have just two answers: Yes; No. Don't try to use the in-between men, just go straight to him and he'll give you an answer." And that's how I've dealt with him and that's how I've been successful, because when he has said No, I will say to him, "But why?" and he'll give me the answer and when I see the reason I just thank him and just leave



the office. It's because I take time to know why and to try to understand why.

A: When did Mr. Kent leave Kamehameha Schools?

H: About five or six years ago. Yeah, about that time. I forgot the exact time, but about five or six years.

A: He's on the mainland now?

H: No, he lives here. They have a home here. I don't think he'll leave Hawaii; he loves it too much to leave it.  
Presently, I am working on a new Hawaiian hymnal. We hope to get it ready by Christmas. And it's going to be an entirely new Hawaiian hymnal. I did a revision of the old Hawaiian hymn books and that came out about twenty years or so ago and it's out-lived its usefulness, so we're working on this new hymn book with many, many additional things besides just hymns--information on many things regarding our church history here in Hawaii. They're not long to read, just two or three sentences, but enough to give you just enough information. And I have a very good committee and they're working real hard. We've been meeting for over a year now every week, almost, and, hopefully, we'll get it out--we're anxious to get it out--by Christmas so it can be a Christmas gift. It's lots of work but it's been interesting. I'm sure grateful to the committee that has worked real hard on it.

A: Now may I ask you--do you want to rest for a little while? (She indicates "No.") When did you graduate from the University of Hawaii?

H: 1932.

A: Immediately after that, what did you do?

H: I went to work for Bernice Adele Ross, who was a voice teacher. I did her accompanying for her in her studio and I worked with her for eighteen years.

A: I was trying to remember her. You know, think if I knew her.

H: Bernice Adele Ross. And while I was working with her, I met Verne Waldo Thompson, who was the director of Punahou's music school. [Music school 1929-43 piano, theory; director Music school 1935-43] He was an accomplished accompanist and pianist and I learned many, many things from him in the art of accompanying. And many were the times when we had little recitals there in Mrs. Ross's home and I wasn't the accompanist at the recitals, and many times

the question was: "Why didn't you play? Why did he play?" And my answer was, "I'm not quite ready to do that type of work. When the time comes, I will play." They didn't see what I saw was necessary for my own good and I was willing to give up my seat to the man who knew the business. Who was I to think that I knew better than he?

A: That's a beautiful thing for someone to say.

H: I couldn't do it. I wasn't ready. One of the reasons I am glad that I met Mrs. Ross--and while working for her-- is that I met so many of the women who later in life became members of the Museum Association. And because I had met them in her home, either at a luncheon or at a recital, I felt that I just knew them. And it was quite important for us here at the museum that I knew them because they were the people of Honolulu. And so, when I think back on those days with Mrs. Ross, this is one of the things that I gleaned from her and I'm happy for it. See, they're the people that make up our Women of Honolulu. They speak up for the museum.

When Dr. [Alexander] Spoehr first came and I said to him, "Shall I come tonight?" he said, "No, not necessarily." I came against that and he learned that night how many people I knew that he didn't know. It was important for me to say to them: "Meet Dr. Spoehr. This young man needs what a lot of you have. Give him a boost with money." I'll never forget that.

A: When you speak of the people of Honolulu, what do you mean?

H: Well, like the MacNaughtons, the [Robert] Mist family, the Woolleys, the Dillinghams, Mrs. Erdman. Oh, I just can't think of them; there're just many of them, but these people are important to the Islands. They are the backbone of Hawaii.

A: And the culture in the Islands.

H: Yes. There's something else that I might forget now. Ah! A bit of vanity, maybe? I was the "Mother of The Year" from Hawaii in 1969. Don't ask me how I got there, but I got elected. And I took my first trip to the mainland then. Yes, the meeting for the mothers was held in Los Angeles; normally at New York, but they decided to come West this year. Well enough. It was far enough for me to go. And I had a wonderful experience, meeting all the mothers from all of the states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. It was a wonderful experience but a thing that I laughed about was I went to the Biltmore Hotel--is that right? right in Los Angeles?--and they gave us--I think

they made an error--they gave the Hawaii committee woman and myself suites. But when I looked at the room I said, "Well, so Hawaii can boast of better suites than this." I didn't tell them that, but that's what went through my mind because of the Kahala [Hilton], the Mauna Kea [Beach Hotel], the Kona Hilton, the Naniloa. Just happens that I had experience--had had the privilege of living in some of these hotels and visiting some, so in my mind's eye I was recalling how much nicer our suites in some of our hotels were than there. Oh, that was not very nice but I just smiled at the room that we had. I will say this; I was glad for the little refrigerator because we had taken up leis for every mother and so, between the two refrigerators, we jammed them with these leis that we had taken up, so that every mother received a fresh lei.

A: How lovely and what a wonderful idea.

H: Um hum. And special leis, of course, for the president Dorothy Lewis. But only in Hawaii does one think of doing things like this that one can share with everybody else. I enjoyed my visit but I was home right smack that night with my family by ten o'clock in the night, much to the chagrin of some of our friends who felt that I should have gone on to visit. Well enough, I should have perhaps, but I can't see visiting alone. I would have then no one to share my visit with and sit and talk about the visit, so I preferred not to go, despite the invitations that came my way, and came right on home, leaving about an hour after the conference was dismissed. I know the family was kind of put out, but I said, "No, I can't see going."

A: You just wanted to get back.

H: With my husband not there. No, I don't believe in visiting alone. I feel that I can not share it with somebody. If I am on a conference, then I do not wish for company, 'cause I'd be out all day. But if I'm going on a trip, I can not see going on a trip alone. To me, that's stupid, because I feel that I need to share my joy with two pairs of eyes rather than just one, 'cause two people don't look at one object the same way, so you have an exchange of ideas and to me that is more exciting.

A: Surely is. What is your husband's--did we say yet what he does?

H: Oh, my husband was in the employ of the Union Oil Company for about thirty-five years. He's now retired. His hobby is luau-making. He's slowly letting that go because the years are creeping up on him, but he loves to do things and I will say that he was one man heading for re-

tirement with a hobby already in the making, so that when he retired he went right into this thing. I think of so many men who retire and vegetate because they didn't have the time nor the sense to look for something to do when they retired from their work. That's pitiful. It's pitiful.

A: Yes. This luau-making, he sets the whole thing?

H: He will assist you and give you a breakdown of the amount of food, even to the cost. He does a lot of work with the churches. There're five churches that he helps. He gives them the breakdown and says to them, "This is the total cost of the luau. Here's your expense. The rest of it, just get out and sell the tickets and make it." And they do.

A: But he is responsible for the whole thing.

H: Yeh, he's sort of--what is it?--supervises, yes. He tells them how to do it or where to buy or suggests how to maybe serve better, although he leaves them to do most of the thinking themselves, which is right. The right way. He goes in as an advisor. Of course he would have to put his hand to work too, 'cause he just can't stand on the sidelines and let them do it. He must pitch in. We have a grandson, Daniel, whom we call "Grandpa's Shadow." We feel that he'll be the next one that can really just step into his grandfather's shoes and do the work. Daniel is an eighth grader at Kamehameha but he knows exactly how to do the things for Grandpa, especially when it comes to the imu, which is the pit in which the pig is cooked. He knows every step from the very beginning up to the last and he's really--I suppose we're priming him 'cause we feel something should be kept. And that is the only way to do it; to take a child and make him do the work. The child, of course, has to be willing. He is most willing and so there's no question when Grandpa has a luau coming up. Daniel is there, he's called for at Kamehameha at that time and goes with Grandpa to the pit, ready to put the pigs in, whatever the number is--eight, twelve, or sixteen.

A: Well, that's wonderful that he's learning to do that. I have one more thing to ask you, I think. What event in Hawaii's history had the greatest impact on your life?

H: Maybe World War I. I mean, if you're thinking of that. I was a student at Kamehameha at that time and there were limitations as far as food was concerned and we learned to do without. And I've thought back many times of those days when we were without--like butter just once a week.

And I didn't see any strain in not having butter but once a week.

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

A: Now will you please tell us how you got the job at Bishop Museum?

H: Mrs. Ross one day approached me in the studio and asked me if I would be interested in a job at the Bishop Museum as a guide to exhibits. I looked at her with a question mark on my face and I said, "But what about you?" meaning that if I took this job at the museum what then would happen to her studio work. I would not be there to do the accompanying for her. She says, "Oh, we can do that after hours." Well, that didn't satisfy me because I felt that I had been with her for so long and I just couldn't see leaving her sort of on the spot. For every question I posed, she had an answer.

I finally gave in to her and came to the museum, for one of the other things that I had to think about was that I was accompaniest also for the Kamehameha School for Boys Glee Club and that meant that I would have to leave the museum three times a week to go to do the accompanying, and I couldn't see that. That's not good business, if you're going to go into the employ of the museum. At least that's the way I felt. But when I said that to her, she says, "We'll take care of that." Very glibly, "We'll take care of that."

The thing was that she wanted me to come here. Then I also said to her, "But I'm not ready for that. I don't know anything." She says, "Sir Peter will teach you." And I said, "But he doesn't have the time." She says, "He will make the time." And he made the time. He gave me one hour of every day for about two months. Now I saw then that they were anxious for me to come here and I also realized, a short time after, that she herself was thinking of stopping teaching but she didn't say it at the time. I continued playing for her after hours but then I saw that slowly she was letting her pupils go, for she was feeling that it was time to stop. And she did stop her teaching.

A: And that was what year that you came here?

H: I came into the museum in 1949, September. So it's--what is it? 1949, '59, '69--twenty-two years as of this month that I've been here at the museum and I've enjoyed every minute of it.

Shall I repeat about the daughter?

A: Yes, please do.

H: A word, perhaps, about our children. Martha directs the Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club choral group and presently she assists with the music at the Kamehameha Schools. She's in a position to do so, 'cause all of the children are at school and so she can move about and feel free to go and come when they call her. She has done some arranging for the music that she uses in her choral group.

Our son is in the employ of Aloha Airlines in the promotion department and that means music again, so he's done quite a bit of traveling--mainland United States, Canada, over into Japan, and down to Australia. He has just returned from a three weeks' stint in Canada. He loves his music and plays and sings. He plays almost any Hawaiian instrument and he sings any part that needs to be filled. I'm proud of our two children. (Aside) You notice I use the word "our"? Well, I feel it's not mine, it's for both of us.

My family--my sisters and brothers--I'd like to share this one thing: at Christmas time, it was our custom for many, many years to visit the Theodore and Mary Richards, for Mr. Richards did a great deal for my father and we felt that the only way we could say "Thank you" to them was to take our family, whatever our families consisted of, and visit them on Christmas Day. And we did that for, oh, say about thirty years and finally, when both of them were deceased, we continued our music in another way. We would borrow someone's home and give a Christmas program, inviting all of our friends, as many as the house could hold, remembering, however, that next year we were to invite the other person whom we were not able to get in the last year. And this has been going on for, now, about thirty-five years.

A: Do you still do this?

H: Still do it. We just did one Christmas--they were thinking of this coming Christmas. I don't know what's up to be, but we do that. We feel that that is the way we want to share our Christmas with our friends in Hawaii.

A: Wonderful. That's a wonderful idea.

H: Included in the singing are the grandchildren, the great-grandchildren, nephews, nieces, in-laws, whatever--whoever could come and sing, we invite them to come and join us.

A: You should be like the King Family of Hawaii. The King Family on television.

H: Um hum. Well, we just do that mostly because we want to say "Thank you" to all the people that have been so good to our family all these years. And there're many and many of them. I know when I went to Kamehameha, my tuition was paid through the Brown--the Ii--Fund.

A: John Ii Brown?

H: Right. Fund. And I feel that as Mr. Richards helped my father, they don't want the money, but then you must return in kind that which made your education possible. And that is why many things I do, not for what I can get out of it financially, but it's because I must say "Thank you" to these good people who helped our family in more ways than one. (Aside to me) This is so important. I told that to Mrs. Watumull when she asked me if I would help her. I told her, "I do these things, not for the honor I would get, but because I must say "Thank you" to these people--the Dillinghams, Mrs. Erdman, the Brown Fund, the Richards family, the Midkiffs, oh, so many of them.

A: Was Mrs. Watumull working on a special project?

H: Well, she did that Flora Pacifica last year. She got me in on the Sunday deal. I couldn't say "No" to her because this is the kind of thing that I must say "Yes" because it's my way to say "Thank you."

A: Yes. Very good.

H: That's important. I try to get that--some of them will say, "How come you do that for free?" you know. I look at them and I say, "Just to say 'Thank you.'" "Why do you do it for free?" I never answer them, I don't tell them why, because already they've drawn the curtain, they can not see the why. At least try to find or feel the why. They've drawn the curtain and I can't share the why with them. But if it's a person that asks me in such a way that I know they're willing to receive what I have to say, I will tell them.

A: I know that it's time to go (because she had indicated she would allow an hour for the interview when it was arranged) and I also know that it would be difficult to answer perhaps, but has there been, while you've been here at the museum, any visitor that you especially remember for any reason?

H: Emperor Hirohito's son--the name escapes me right now [Crown Prince Akihito]--when he and his wife came to visit the museum.

A: Was this during his recent visit?

H: The director at that time was Dr. Alexander Spoehr. The thing that impressed me about the visit was: I was glad of the privilege to see them face to face, but it was the way the visit was handled. At any big place, the director of the museum in our case would be the one to be the host. When the prince was here, Dr. Spoehr felt that the person to tour him was one of the scientists from Japan who had come to the museum on a fellowship in the entomology division and he felt that that should be the person to tour the prince through the museum. That made a big impression on my mind, for there Dr. Spoehr knew his place and knew also that we were trying to show the prince that here from Japan is a fellow entomologist. And we felt that he could be on equal ground with the rest of us to take the prince on a tour of the museum. To me, that impressed me more than anything else I think I've seen anywhere. And I think of that so often. How many of us who could do likewise, but always we want to be IT. But I learned a big lesson then from Dr. Spoehr.

(Aside to me) He wouldn't do it. You asked me for the man's name (I asked her about the spelling of his name) but, see, it was a psychological thing. Here comes this boy, a fellow from Japan, and also the emperor's son and the emperor are scientists, each in his own, so what nicer thing to do than to have them with him . . . of course, why not? Why not? (This aside may not be transcribed completely accurately because it is difficult to hear what she says)

I'm not prone to traveling, in the sense of the word. I love to travel just here in the Neighbor Islands, for I feel that my place here in the museum calls for these occasional visits to see what goes on among our Neighbor Islands because when questions are asked, they're asked about home; they're not asked about mainland. So I'm not interested in going on these trips. But this is how I feel about it: all the people come to our feet. They come to us from Australia, from India, from Japan, from Okinawa, and from the European countries, then we can talk to them. But if I were to go on a tour, I wouldn't get near a native because I'd probably be more likely to stay within the tour group and occasionally, perhaps, get to talk to one of the natives. But here where we are, they come right up to us and we're able to talk to them and I feel that it's much better than touring these areas. I do a lot of reading to keep up with what goes on in areas away from here and think part of the thing is I must keep myself abreast by reading up on whatever goes on in other parts of the world. To me, that is important. But I must be prepared to answer the questions that relate to Hawaii



because that would be their concern--Hawaii--and I try to be prepared to answer them.

A: Would you mention your affiliations.

A: I am a member of the Honolulu Academy of Arts and a member of the Friends of Iolani Palace. I'm a life member of the University Alumni Association. (Aside to me) This Mother of the Week, she [her daughter] knew about it before I did.

A: Oh, the Mother of the Year.

H: Mother of the Year. I wasn't aware of it because the contact was between my daughter and my sister, Dorothy. So she wrote up on me. Then she also wrote up just recently another memo for the Hawaiian hymnal and when she read it to me, I said, "Oh, dear." And then, when I went to the meeting, I said, "Just a few," which meant that they had to cull what she wrote. Just the important things; never-mind the visible. She's a beautiful writer. Oh, she's a beautiful writer. I wish I could write the way she does.

A: Is this Dorothy?

H: Yes. She's got it--like if you're in doubt, you ask her. Just feel free to call her and discuss it with her, because she's really a . . .

A: If you give me the telephone number.

H: 845-0908, which is the church. That is for the church. She's the clerk at the church. And the other number (her residence) is 845-6969. Feel free to call her.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen

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## THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.